CHAPTBR - I

STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INDIAN OCEAN

The geopolitical, economic and strategic importance of the Indian Ocean has been historically realised. In the ancient and medieval times the Indian Ocean witnessed commercial traffic between India on the one hand and south, south-east Asia and Arab countries on the other. In the modern period the Indian Ocean decisively determined the destinies of the countries of the region. The spice trade of pre-Vasco de Gama years attracted the European powers to this region. The clash of interests led to the spectacular economic, political and military struggle involving Portuguese, Dutch, British and French. This finally paved the way for the British domination. The colonial mode of production introduced by the western powers not only changed the socio-economic spheres of the countries of the region but also made them dependent on the western economic system after their independence. This dependency situation determined the economic relevance of the region for the European countries. With the innovations in strategic weapons technology the Indian Ocean was incorporated in the grand Oceanic strategy of the western powers led by the USA. Coupled with this the prospects of seabed mining heightened the importance of the Indian Ocean. In fact geo-political thinkers like Admiral Mahan looking at
the future had predicted:

"Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. This Ocean is the key to the seven seas. In the twenty first century, the destiny of the world will be decided on its waters."¹

Hence a deeper study of the relevance of the Indian Ocean in contemporary international relations is pertinent. To analyse the problems some categories like geo-strategic political and economic have been devised. These categories are not mutually exclusive, but for analytical purposes separately dealt with.

**Geo-Strategic and Political Relevance:**

The spatial dynamics of the Indian Ocean in terms of its islands, straits and embayed size make it unique. Unlike the Pacific and the Atlantic this is a "land locked Ocean."²

North-western quadrant of the Indian Ocean contains vital sea lanes, land mass and islands. The vast landmass-

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Middle East, Persian Gulf, Arabian Peninsula and Horn of Africa - is geo-strategic and politically significant.

Arab-Israel conflict has not only made this region politically significant but also has drawn the external power to it. American support to Israel and Business support to PLO for their fight for a home land are cases in point.

In and around the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea the turmoil centres in the Ethiopian realm: Vulnerable because of the inclusion with its boundaries of alien ethnic populations which harbour traditional centrifugal tendencies; coupled with the national liberation movement represented by Eritrean guerrillas added significance to the region.

And in Persian Gulf the Iran-Iraq war and resurgent groups made this region politically sensitive. Not only does it have a strong bearing on the oil production but also flow of oil through the gateway of the Gulf - the strait of Horms. The threat by Iran to close the strait in the event of American entry is a pointer towards the grave future possibilities.

Equally the Arabian Peninsula is volatile. The mobilization of the People on religious and orthodox lines for nation building purposes may not help legitimising the traditional regimes. Any time the revolutionary violence may erupt.
Geographically these (Persian Gulf, Horn of Africa, Middle East, Arabian Peninsula) constitute one of the important regions in the globe. This is due to the location of important straits, gulfs and oil resources.

The Bab-el-Mandeb strait is the gateway to the Red Sea. And through Suez Canal, Red Sea is connected to the Mediterranean. Thus it provides the shortest route to the European part from the Far East and Australia. Though the Suez route has declined in its significance because of the development of super tankers, the commercial relations between littoral and non-littoral countries are maintained through this canal.

The Gulf of Aden is the bottleneck which is created by the projection of Africa and the south-eastern tip of Arabia. The entry to this gulf is from the east side and is controlled by the island of Socotra. For ages it had been the base of Arabs.

The geographical importance of Oman lies in its Peninsular projection to the Persian Gulf. The strait of Hormus can be effectively blocked by any naval power from the Peninsular part of Oman. Since the strait is used for the passage of oil tankers it is considered as strategically important by the western powers. The nearness of Baluchistan to Persian Gulf region makes this area geo-strategically significant. It is
because of the fact that the volatile situation in Baluchistan is a potential threat to the oil rich conservative regimes of the region.

The geo-strategic importance of the North-western quadrant of the Indian Ocean has been historically realised. Albuquerque controlled the Red Sea choke point so as to dominate the Western Indian Ocean. The American deployment of Middle-East Force (MIDFOR) in 1948, the eastern suggestion to assign strategic responsibility to Turkey to influence events in Persian Gulf in favour of NATO power, the historical plan of linking Iraq with Berlin - Baghdad Railway and the current Soviet intervention in Afghanistan amply demonstrate the importance of the area.

The south western part of the Ocean containing islands and archipelagoes provide an ideal oceanic naval based in these islands. British involvement to form BIOT (British Indian Ocean Territory), American involvement to construct a fullfledged military base in Diego Garcia and French role in Malagasy to divide the island for military and strategic reasons attest to the geo-strategic importance of the region.

3. He was a Geopolitical Strategist of 17th century, Portugal.

Apart from the islands, the location of cape route, Mozambique channel and Simonstown asserts the international significance of the region.

Cape route connects the Indian Ocean with Atlantic. Simonstown provides a strategic place to guard the cape route. In fact it is the cape route which during the closure of the Suez canal provided the only passage for the industrialised countries of the Western World to establish link with the Indian Ocean region. The oil supper tankers because of their grand size cannot pass through the Suez canal, hence significantly dependent on this route. Thus the security of the cape route determines the oil flow to the western countries. On top of this the political equation between South Africa and the western world because of the rich raw materials of the former heightens the geo-strategic importance of the area. Despite the criticisms from the Afro-Asian countries the USA and the western countries have not severed the economic relations with South Africa. The U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, G. Mennen Williams, explaining the U.S. stand before the sub-committee of the House of Representatives on 1st March 1966,
said:

While cessation of investment might increase our credibility and influence with African countries in our efforts to encourage a non-violent solution it would seriously handicap our ability to carry on a dialogue with South Africa. It would cause some damage to our economic, scientific and strategic interests. 5

This economic relations between the United States and South Africa demonstrates the geo-strategic importance of the area. Partly because of this the U.S. is not supporting the national liberation movements active in the Southern Africa.

In the Eastern Indian Ocean region the complex set of straits and islands (Andaman, Nicobar, Cocos near Australia, strait of Malacca and Sunda) are strategically located. The setting up of a communication base in North West Cape (Australia) by the United States in 1963 signified the geo-strategic importance of the area.

The straits of Malacca connects the Indian Ocean with the Pacific. The trans-oceanic oil Passage and the movement of submarines between the Indian and Pacific Ocean greatly depend on this strait. The dynamism of the Japanese industrial society significantly hinges on the safety passage of oil through this strait. Historically the Japanese conquest of Singapore, entry of Seventh Fleet to the Indian Ocean from Subic Bay in 1971 and military activities related to ANZUS and SEATO reflected the potential importance of the area.

The strategic importance of the Indian Ocean has been overwhelmingly determined by the location of islands. The islands are sparsely populated and are away from the littoral. From the standpoint of security and from the standpoint of the line of least political resistance the islands provide an ideal setting for establishment of military bases. Hence, the western powers namely the USA, France and Britain have set up military bases in the region.

The setting up of communication centre in Diego Garcia by the USA and the subsequent plans to expand the facilities with a view to converting it into a military base has not only bolstered the nuclear strategic but also the conventional interventionist capability. This has contributed enormously to the American predominance in the Indian Ocean region.
In fact President Ford's statement that Diego Garcia is not aimed against Soviet Union may be viewed in the context of the American interventionist capability.  

Another geographically important feature of the Indian Ocean is the peninsular projection of India deep into the Ocean. This according to Sardar Panikkar "Changes the Character of the Indian Ocean." The geographical contiguity of Sri Lanka to the Indian Peninsula creates an ideal location which can be seriously taken in any strategic calculation.

The geo-strategic importance of the Indian Ocean has been underscored in the U.S. action to deploy submarine launched ballistic missiles. The ballistic missiles deployed in Polaris submarines will provide invulnerable second strike capability to the United States. The American action is the continuation of the cold war policy of the encirclement of Soviet Union. In fact the Polaris operating in the northern reaches of the Indian Ocean could cover a substantial part of the Soviet Union and even that of China. The geographical proximity of the USSR to the Indian Ocean provided a strategic opportunity to the U.S.

The development of second generation nuclear weapons, namely Poseidon and Trident, will provide a strong strategic vantage point to the United States. Coupled with this the generation of ULMS (Under Sea Launched Missile Systems) will further strengthen the United States Strategic nuclear capability. These weapons (with far greater range as compared to the Polaris) if deployed in the Indian Ocean by the United States will enhance strategic importance of the area.

The Soviet entry to the Indian Ocean in 1968 was with a view to neutralising the nuclear threat from the Indian Ocean. But Soviet capability to launch an anti-submarine attack is very much limited. This is due to the lack of technological sophistication in the field of anti-submarine warfare. If with the evolution of the new technology Soviet Union also develops long range and anti-submarine attack capability then Indian Ocean will be strategically significant for both the Super Powers. But presently the defensive capability of the USSR in the Indian Ocean is no match to the strategic nuclear capability of the United States.

From the Chinese point of view the Indian Ocean is strategically very relevant. As U.S. Bajpayee points out:
The growing contradictions between China and USSR if escalates further and the Chinese develop technological capability to deploy SLBMS then the likely area of deployment will be obviously the Bay of Bengal. Hence the countries bordering the area like Thailand, Bangladesh, Pakistan and the islands in the Indian Ocean will acquire new significance in the strategic matrix of China.

Attempts to achieve further sophistication, not only in the field of submarine but also surface vessels, point towards a greater reliance upon the use of sea power as a major source of deterrence for sometime to come. In this context the nuclear powered surface vessels will further consolidate the strategic capability of the United States. In 1971 the nuclear powered American surface vessels, Enterprise entered the Bay of Bengal to show off force resortedly with a view to 'restraining' India in the Indo-Pak war.

The nuclear powered naval fleet enables the US not only to have a strong conventional interventionist capability, but also to operate more freely, even in the far away Indian Ocean.

in support of the Polaris, the Poseidon and the Trident submarines.

Besides the USA, France is also preparing herself to bolster her strategic nuclear and conventional interventionist capability. She is operating in the Indian Ocean region. Hence there are possibilities that France may increase her naval capability in the region, thus making the area strategically significant.

The oil resources in the Gulf have attracted western powers to establish strategic relations with the regimes in the oil rich region. It has already been stated that the U.S. deployed MIDFOR in 1948 claiming to safeguard her 'interests'. In subsequent years several measures were taken: promulgation of Eisenhower doctrine, the support for the formation of Regional Cooperation for development, the supply of military hardware and software to Saudi Arabia, Iran, Oman, Israel etc.

9. The doctrine advocates the railing back of communism and a policy of massive retaliation and brinkmanship towards the non-aligned countries. See R. Ramachandani, "Super Power Rivalry in Africa and the Indian Ocean", Foreign Affairs Reports, ICWA, Delhi, p. 140.

10. It aims at pooling the resources of these countries under a regional economic development programme. It was formed to limit American's direct military commitment.
and the attempt to create alliance within local states through Nixon doctrine were some of them.

The Western powers led by the USA argue that the military presence in the Indian Ocean is necessitated because of their economic stakes, both on the high seas and in the littoral. As a matter of fact a large part of the trade and commerce including oil resources of this area is directly or indirectly controlled by them. This is partly due to the pattern of trade that developed during colonial era. But the military presence cannot be a function of the economic interest. Interests in terms of commerce and trade should be based on quid-pro-quo. Economic interests cannot be buttressed by the conventional, orthodox coercive capability. Events have proved that even the western military presence could not prevent a revolutionary regime from coming into power. Neither the British bases in Iraq and Iraq’s membership of Baghdad pact could prevent the 1958 coup de’tat, nor could the presence of British and American bases in Libiya halt the coup de’tat, in that country in 1969. Even in the recent past the American military presence could not prevent the fall of the Shah of Iran.

Hence the economic interests in the region can best be served by establishing commercial relations with the countries of the region. For instance the Soviet interests in the Iraqi oil resources in 1971 was based on commercial give and take principle.12

This may be interpreted "as a counter global strategy which coincided with some of the basic interests of the bulk of the new states of Asia, Africa and Latin America".13 In fact the Soviet entry to the Indian Ocean has been interpreted as a defensive posture to counter the increasing strategic nuclear capability of the United States. Soviet Union's efforts to offset the Western attempt to encircle her have been reflected in the support to national liberation movements in Asia and Africa, and in the signing of the friendship treaties with the countries like Iraq, Syria, Libiya and India. It has also been reported that the Soviet Union has established bases in some countries. But it is difficult to establish the validity.

Baring the conflict between the USA and the USSR the tension situation in the Indian Ocean region in geo-political and strategic terms has taken a different turn with the Chinese

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has influenced the resurgent groups in Africa and Asia.

The Chinese thesis arising out of the Sino-Soviet ideological controversy, on the use of violence in the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle, not only gave the Chinese an opportunity to project themselves as better revolutionaries but it also meant that the Chinese need not supply the insurgents with large quantities of arms or heavy weapons, that are not needed for the guerilla type of warfare.

Accordingly the Chinese supported the PLO but actively encouraged the popular front led by George Habash. The national liberation forces in Oman, Arabian Gulf and South Africa were supported by China. The Chinese influence not only challenged the imperialist forces in the area but also the traditional regimes perpetrated by the western support.

French role in the Indian Ocean region to establish links with Portugal and South Africa in 1950s and 1960s for economic strategic and political reasons amply demonstrated the support to the racist and imperialist forces. Coupled with this the French military presence in the Indian Ocean (reunion and Bijbouiti) reinforce the French influence in the region.

Thus there is a complex situation created in the Indian Ocean region by the involvement of Super Powers and great powers.
The western powers support the conservative and racist regimes; on the contrary the national liberation movements challenge the Western powers' neo-colonialism and the traditional conservative governments. This is specially so in South Africa and West Asia. The fall of the Shah of Iran and the capture of Grand Mosque in Saudi Arabia have fostered a fear psychosis not only amongst the western powers but also traditional regimes. Hence to counter the national liberation movements, to perpetuate the traditional conservative regimes and above all to enhance the strategic nuclear and interventionist capability the US is seriously considering to create the Fifth Fleet for the Indian Ocean. Coupled with the Seventh Fleet in the Pacific and Sixth Fleet in the Atlantic the Fifth Fleet will enable to form a grand oceanic strategy in the second cold war period. This will have a strong bearing on the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean. As Rasheeduddin Khan has observed:

The other direct manifestation of the second cold war . . . is the deterioration of the situation on the Indian Ocean region. The U.S. has increased its military strength in the Indian Ocean and has used events in the Horn of Africa, Iran, Iraq, Gulf and Afghanistan as justification for not only the expansion and upgrading of the Diego Garcia base into a nuclear powered
establishment, but has also recently created the central command, coordinating among other things the activities of the Rapid Deployment Force, thereby transforming the Indian Ocean region including the Gulf as the vital interests to the U.S.\textsuperscript{14}

Moreover, the reported agreement\textsuperscript{15} for deployment of Pershing 2 and Cruise Missiles in Israel seems to have drawn the Asian continent to the extended deterrence and the limited nuclear war framework of President Reagan.

Thus the geo-political and strategic importance of the Indian Ocean in contemporary international relations has been greatly reinforced.

\textbf{Economic Relevance:}

Agriculture forms the back bone of the countries of the Indian Ocean region. But the land population ratio is so high that the food scarcity compels the countries to import large amounts from the external sources. The lack of technological

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 34.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Times of India} (Delhi) "Secret Missile Clause in U.S. - Israeli Accord", Dec. 12, 1982.
sophistication, fertilizer and adequate means of irrigation are primarily responsible for the low productivity.

There is no doubt that the agricultural economy is having great many problems but still these countries supply large quantities of agricultural raw materials to the industrial nations of the world. This is largely the function of the lack of sound industrial complex. Essentially the Western countries are dependent on the raw materials of these countries for their industrial sector. The operation of transnational and multinational corporations for the so-called 'nation building' purposes further reinforce the linkage of these countries with western economy. To understand this economic linkage or the dependency situation of these countries let us analyse the agricultural and mineral products of the region.

From Table 1 it is clear that the Indian Ocean region as a whole produces 77.3 per cent of natural rubber of the world, 76.2 per cent of tea, 42 per cent of wool, 26.7 per cent of cotton lint and 19 per cent of coffee. The southern littoral countries, the South Asia and Southeast Asia countries are the major producer of these cash crops in the Indian Ocean region; it is quite evident that they were introduced by the colonial powers for their own benefit i.e. these were the areas
### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>10.0</th>
<th>0.4</th>
<th>19.0</th>
<th>26.7</th>
<th>76.2</th>
<th>32.0</th>
<th>32.0</th>
<th>7.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>World</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Region</strong></td>
<td>2244</td>
<td></td>
<td>244</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South Asia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>West Asia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Southern Africa</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Southern Indian Ocean</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figures in thousand metric tons.*

Agricultural Products of The Region 1971

Based on UN Economic and Statistical Year Book, 1972-73.

*Including Arabian Peninsula.*
which were supplying raw materials for industries of the European countries. Still the same linkage is maintained but in the form of indirect economic consumption.

The level of industrial development has not changed significantly and therefore, these countries are unable to use them as the base for their own industrial development. Further, for the successful implementation of planned economic programmes these countries need economic and technological aid from the developed nations of the world and that is available after assured supply of these cash crops to those aid giving countries.

Besides these agricultural products, the countries of the region are a rich store house of mineral wealth. The region produces 80.7 per cent of the world's gold, 56.6 per cent of tin, 39 per cent of antimony, 32.5 per cent of crude petroleum, 28.5 per cent of manganese, 25.2 per cent of nickel, 18.5 per cent of bauxite and 18 per cent of lead. It produces significant amount of iron ore (13 per cent) and zinc, 12.5 per cent of the world's production.
Table 2 and 3 give a region-wise breakdown of mineral production and it shows that the south Littoral African region is important for coal, iron ore, copper, gold, lead and manganese, the West Asian region is important for petroleum and its products; the south Asian region is significant in the production of several minerals like coal, iron ore, bauxite, manganese and natural gas; the southeast Asian region is important for

Table 2

MINERAL PRODUCTS 1971
(thousand metric tons)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Coal</th>
<th>Iron Ore</th>
<th>Bauxite</th>
<th>Copper</th>
<th>Antimony</th>
<th>Gold</th>
<th>Crude Petrol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Littoral African Countries</td>
<td>56873</td>
<td>7963</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>18.24</td>
<td>987</td>
<td>13000 (UAR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Asia</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>614650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>76107</td>
<td>18047</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>7167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.E. Asia</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1301</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>37800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>42493</td>
<td>24861</td>
<td>7924</td>
<td>13:1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>176177</td>
<td>50872</td>
<td>9997</td>
<td>1089</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>1014</td>
<td>674629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of world</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on UN Economic Statistical Year Book, 1972-73
bauxite, gold tin, tungsten and zinc; and the Australian region has ziebale production of several minerals. Among the countries, South Africa, southern Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia in Africa, the Persian Gulf region, India, Indonesia and Malaysia in Asia and Australia are important mineral producing states of the Indian Ocean region.

Table 3

MINERAL PRODUCTION
(thousand metric tons)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Manganese</th>
<th>Nickel</th>
<th>Tin</th>
<th>Tungsten</th>
<th>Zinc</th>
<th>Natural gas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Littoral African Countries 101</td>
<td>1070</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Asia 24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8337</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia 3</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3333</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.E. Asia 11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4311</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia 451</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>110.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>265</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL 590</td>
<td>2102</td>
<td>131.0</td>
<td>102.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>16317</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of World 18.5</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mineral wealth of the region is greatly diversified and spatially it could be complementary to provide a sound infrastructure for industrial development. The Western countries are highly dependent on the rich raw materials and mineral resources of the region. Hence they have great stake. The western dependence on such important items is shown in Table 4. It is clearly seen that most of the minerals are explored and exploited in the Indian Ocean region. Hence it is quite natural that western countries remain dependent on the minerals of the region.

**TABLE 4**

**WEST'S DEPENDENCE ON IMPORTS OF IMPORTANT ITEMS**
(Imports as share of consumption - as percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alluminium</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nickel</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tin</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron Ore</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manganese</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phosphate</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>Exporter</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Equally concerned are the countries of the Third World which are dependent on the Gulf region for their oil requirements.

But inspite of the bountiful nature, which could provide a sound industrial infrastructure, the region has not been able to develop industrially.

Industrially it has remained a backward region, the backward could be concluded on the basis of several indicators, probably the best in the per capita consumption of energy. Table 5 gives four categories of the Indian Ocean littoral states. Except the first category all other categories are

Table 5
COUNTRIES CLASSIFIED ON THE BASIS OF PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION OF ENERGY 1971
(Quantities in million, metric tons of coal equivalent in kilogram per capital)

World's average is 1,804

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First category</th>
<th>Second category</th>
<th>Third category</th>
<th>Fourth category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>more than 1800</td>
<td>900-1800</td>
<td>450-900</td>
<td>below 450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait (12588), Christmas Island (8250), Australia(5200), Baharin(4285), South Africa (2746), Israel (2154).</td>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>Afars and Issacs Seychelles, Southern Rhodesia Zambia, Iran,Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Trucial, Oman,Yemen, D.R. Malaysia, Singapore.</td>
<td>Burundi and Ethiopia Kenya, Malwai, Mali Mauritius, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, UAR, Jordan, Muscat, and Oman, Yemen, Afghanistan, Burma, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on UN Economic Statistical Year Book, 1972-73.
far below the normal and most of them have no industrial base. There are exceptions like India, Indonesia and Pakistan which have made sizeable progress in the industrial development but because of the high population density base, the impact on the per capita consumption of energy is less noticeable. The regional industrial landscape becomes more clear if one analyses the figures for industrial products (Table 6). The poor regions are those of West Asia and South East Asia inspite of the fact that they are very richly endowed with mineral wealth.

Table 6

**IMPORTANT INDUSTRIES 1971**

*(thousand tons)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Sugar</th>
<th>Cement</th>
<th>Cotton</th>
<th>Nitrogen Fertilizer</th>
<th>Crude steel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Littoral African countries</td>
<td>3517 +</td>
<td>7136 +</td>
<td>67 +</td>
<td>227 +</td>
<td>4779 +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>686</td>
<td>3948</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>4751</td>
<td>15302</td>
<td>1254</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>6564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Asia</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>6293</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.E. Asia</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>1696</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2269</td>
<td>4042</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>7016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>12492</td>
<td>38417</td>
<td>1607</td>
<td>1623</td>
<td>18634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of World</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Figures with + are for the North African countries of this region)

*Source:* Based on UN Economic Statistical Year Book, 1972-73
India is significant in South Asian region. Similarly South Africa is the African and Australia in the SouthEastern Indian Ocean region. The lack of regional interdependence in industrial sector makes this region dependent largely on the western countries. This ultimately paves the way for the economic exploitation, which can be attributed to the operation of multinational and transnational corporations.

The rapidly increasing population and growing scarcity of food further explains the increasing dependence on the western countries. The Indian Ocean is flanked by Africa, Asia and Australia. These countries lack industrial sector and so are largely dependent on the industrial products of the west. Thus these countries become markets for the industrial products of western countries. But the western countries' dependence on the Gulf oil is significant. This can be inferred from the figures 1 and 2. In figure 1 the import of Persian Gulf as a percentage of oil consumption of US, Japan, France and Western Europe is given. It is clear from the figure that in percentage of oil consumption European oil imported from Gulf between 1964 and 1977 grew from 60 to 64. For the U.S. it increased from 4 to 16 per cent; for Japan it increased from 60 to 78 per cent; and for France it rose from 50 to 74 per cent.
In figure 2 the Persian Gulf oil imports as a percentage of primary energy consumption has been provided. It is clear that in percentage of primary energy consumed European oil imported from the Gulf between 1964 and 1977 grow from 24.5 to 35; for Japan this increase is 44 to 58 per cent; for the U.S. it increased from 44 to 58 per cent. The western countries take resort to military, political and diplomatic means to buttress their economic stronghold. As has already been explained the interventionist capability of the US in the Indian Ocean was demonstrated in 1971 when the nuclear powered enterprise entered the Indian Ocean. The same strategy was employed during the 'oil crisis' period of 1973. "The USA despatched the task force led by the aircraft carrier Hancock into the area in November 1973. It was replaced by another one led by Oriskany, in December".  

All these are pointers to the interventionist strategy employed by the USA to perpetuate its economic interests. In fact Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr., Chief of Naval Operations (US), said:

> The Indian Ocean has become the area with the potential to produce major shifts in the global power balance over the next decade. It follows that we must have the ability to

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influence events in that area; and the capability to deploy our military power in the region is an essential element of such influence. That in my judgement is the crux of the rationale for that we are planning to do at Diego Garcia".17

With the fall of the Shah of Iran, USA has taken several military steps to consolidate its position in the Western Indian Ocean area. The deployment of rapidly moving force, erection of strategic command structure and the strategies to perpetuate traditional regimes in the Western Asia are some of the measures to safeguard the western interest. The Soviet presence in Indian Ocean and Soviet intervention in Afghanistan has been interpreted by some Western observers in terms of USSR's oil interests in the Persian Gulf.18 But Soviet deal with the West Asian countries' oil resources is based on commercial quid pro quo. Besides, the Indian Ocean provides the only warm water sea route to connect the Soviet far east with its western part. Hence it is economically and commercially significant for the Soviet


Union. To safeguard these economic interests and to carry on scientific research on the high seas the Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean is vitally necessary. But unlike the western military presence the Soviet presence is devoid of interventionist capability. Hence there is no threat posture involved in later's presence.

Apart from rich land and offshore raw materials and mineral resources the living and non-living resources of the seafed underscore the economic relevance of the region.

The vast continental shelf of the littoral countries and the deep seafed contain valuable resources such as manganese nodules which contain iron, cobalt, nickel and copper. In addition the hot brines of the Red Sea though located at depths of some 6000 feet contain potentially significant amount of zinc, copper, lead, silver, vanadium, molybdenum and iron. In addition to the large scale manganese nodules the extensive field of phosphate nodules representing a possible measure new source of fertilizers has been located on the Agulash Plateau.

Beach sands and offshore areas are actively exploited because of the rich mineral content. Monazite, limenite, rutile

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and Zircon are mined from beach sands along the shores off Kerala state in Southern India; sands rich in limonite, rutile, zircon and magnetite are extracted in North-Eastern Sri Lanka and there is exploitation of beach deposits of planconite used in potash fertilizer in Eastern South Africa. Cassiferite - a major source of tin was probably the first mineral to be exploited on the seabed. Marine production of tin is today concentrated mainly around shores of Thailand upto five miles from shore. Cassiterite production off Thailand and Indonesia account for nearly 4th of the world's offshore tin production. 21

With such a vast potentiality of minerals in the deep seabed the Indian Ocean has attracted the attention of the technologically superior countries for mining purposes. The growing persistance of the American presence in Diego Garcia and the looming prospects of deploying underwater constructions may facilitate the exploitation of the deep seabed. India's achievement in collecting the polymetallic manganese nodules from the Indian Ocean bed and subsequent recognition by the U.N. law of sea conference as a pioneer investor have further opened up the possibilities of large scale deep seabed mining. Exploitation of the seabed resources by the western developed countries will lead to the setting up colonialism on the sea. In fact the exploitation of the seabed resources in the Namibian Coast and

21. Ibid.
and the possibilities of exploitation in Horn of Africa by the western powers has given rise to a fear psychosis amongst the developing countries of the region.

As far as fishing is concerned Indian Ocean has occupied the lowest position in the world. But this is because of the technological and economic constraints of the littoral countries. Total annual production from the Indian Ocean has however increased from about two million tons in 1965 and about 3 million tons in 1974 and this rate of fishing growth measured in terms of weight of catch currency exceeds that of any other major world oceans. The promising fishing opportunities in Antartica and the globalisation of protein deficiency will inevitably lead to the exploitation of rich potentialities in Antartica. In this connection the importance of the Indian Ocean will loom large. It has been interpreted by some western observators:

Super power competition is not the only reason behind the Soviet Union's desire to maintain a significant pressure in the Indian Ocean littoral region. Probably the most important is related to the Russian world wide fishing interests. As Moscow is faced

with restrictions in other areas the Indian Ocean will become increasingly attractive. These fishing interests might be further intensified in the potentially rich Antartica water. 24

It is difficult to say how far this is true.

One more area where the Indian Ocean may become important in economic terms is the harnessing of renewable energy in Methanol plants sited in the Persian Gulf areas. Because of the excessive requirement of the natural gas by these plants they have to be placed near the Gulf. The prospects of producing energy from these plants are brilliant. The Japanese firms have recently begun negotiations to build one such plant in the area. 25 This project if materializes will further heighten the importance of the Persian Gulf area.

Thus the vast expanse of the living and non-living resources of the Indian Ocean promise a great future not only for the peoples of the littoral but also for the far off states. The debate on economic issues between the western developed and developing countries has assumed significant proportions. Manganese

Nodule in this debate may be held as symbolic force in favour of the developing countries. This will draw the Indian Ocean to the vortex of the world politics. It can be asserted with emphasis that the underlying current of the western power domination in the Indian Ocean is the perpetuation of the neo-colonialistic ambitions. This can be further substantiated by referring to the President Carter's state of Union speech wherein he said that U.S. would hesitate to use any means including military to defend its interests in the Gulf and when Robert Tucker wrote - after the oil crisis the US should take over the Gulf oil fields. Unfavourable demographic situation, the underdeveloped and undeveloped condition due to the logic of colonial rule, the technological constraints and the socio-economic pathology contributes towards the economic hegemony of the western power in the Indian Ocean region. In fact it was the technological superiority of the 17th century that paved the way for the western political hegemony over the countries of Asia and Africa. And today though the political hegemony is over the same technological superiority has facilitated economic hegemony.

Recent events in the Middle East the energy crisis and the potential for hostilities in an area subject to chronic instability have necessiated a re-evaluation of US national interests in the Indian Ocean area, problems that may affect those interests and the adequacy of means now available for their protection. These national interests which could require an occasional increased Navy presence are: (i) Free access to and transit in the Indian Ocean, (ii) Protection of U.S. nationals and (iii) Protection of sea lanes and lines of communication. These events and interests are the basis of a requirement to provide logistic support facilities to support a task force operating in the Indian Ocean area. Facilities to be provided are the minimum required to support surface and air operations. Indian Ocean, thus, plays a significant role in strategic and space war scenario. It is interesting to note the broad parallelism in the chronology of the development of direct ascent HIT system against the background of US strategies and military deployment in the Indian Ocean. 27


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27. Jasjit Singh, Indian Ocean in Global Strategies: Some Perspectives, in Akhtar Majeed Indian Ocean: Conflict & Regional Co-operation, p. 44.
1965-66: Diego-Garcia created as British Indian Ocean Territory, believed to have been done on US initiatives. Diego-Garcia leased to USA for defence purposes after local population transferred to Mauritius.

1969: USAF exploring direct ascent ASAT (anti-satellite) concept.

1970: Diego-Garcia communication station becomes operational.

1975: USAF purposes miniature space IR bombing interceptor.


1977: USAF approval $58.7 million contract for ground launched, direct ascent non-nuclear ASAT. Concept of RDF created. Large scale joint Naval-air exercises including Midlink-77 where US (with aircraft carriers Enterprise and Midway). UK, Iran and Pakistan took part in NW Indian Ocean.

1980-83: Diego-Garcia expanded as Naval air base. The US Naval carrier task force deployed in Indian Ocean, level increasing to two carrier battle groups in


Pentagon expects to have HIT vehicles deployed to knock out satellites at altitudes of 24,000 km., altitude employing Minuteman of Trident-1 missile boosters.

2nd Space wing of USAF space command planned to be activated in 1985 to function as space operation centre to manage satellite control centre. Misstar, Navastar and space shuttle activities.
Indian Ocean region, therefore, forms an import and element in US politics of intrusion and the concomitant military presence as part of its global strategy but it is also likely to play a crucial role in space and strategic warfare. Meanwhile, arguments of Persian Gulf oil and freedom of maritime navigation provide a high level of legitimacy to US build up in the Indian Ocean region against the backdrop of the larger looming Soviet threat and its presence in Afghanistan.

In a strategic sense, the Indian Ocean is a distinct entity. The enduring commercial and geopolitical importance of the region means that it is unrealistic to expect the great powers to withdraw their military presence, though some of the littoral states will doubtlessly continue to work towards that ideal. In an era of global political rivalry between the superpowers few areas of the world can expect to avoid some degree of improvement in that struggle - however unwilling and involuntary that participation may be. It is difficult to envisage any future situation in which the extra-regional powers would fail to take an interest in the affairs of the Indian Ocean.